****

Deficit busters (barriers and enablers)

The following are deficit questions and comments that facilitators (and others) commonly encounter when having conversations around Maori student achievement in mainstream schools. The themes centre around academic achievement, student engagement and whanau engagement.

Each barrier question or comment is matched with some possible responses that might help you acknowledge but challenge the thinking that is behind the question or comment. You may have to add to these by listing any resources, research quotes or readings that you know about that might illuminate your response.

**What leaders/teachers say (barriers)**

**Possible responses (enablers)**

**Deficit Questions - Why are we focusing on Maori achievement?**

1. Surely we should be catering for the needs of all our students. Why treat Maori differently?
2. lt doesn't matter what we try, we still can't get our Maori community involved in their children's education or the life of the school.
3. We value all the cultures in our school because we are a multicultural community.
4. All our Maori students are achieving above average (implication that there are no underachievement, problems).
5. Our parents have such low expectations for their children.
6. We have done a lot of PD around effective teaching and we believe that, if we put our emphasis here, the achievement of all students including Maori, will rise accordingly.
7. Maori is too hard to pronounce and that's why l haven't really learned any in the past.
8. I am too afraid to try to speak Maori as I have always felt that l may be criticised for my lack of skill.
9. New Zealand is a non-secular society and, as such, karakia are inappropriate in schools.
10. Many students come to school lacking proper care, regular meals, and are poorly clothed, which hinders achievement. We have so many other issues to overcome with our Maori students and families before any learning takes place - they're caught in the poverty cycle.
11. Maori students come to school with little literacy background and limited experiences to draw on.
12. Transience is a major factor in Maori underachievement at school.
13. We have very few Maori students at our school so Maori achievement is not really a focus for us.
14. Many of our Maori families do not value schooling and are not committed to ensuring that their children attend school regularly.
15. We already do this well - we have a kapa haka group, a community member who comes into our school weekly to teach te reo.
16. Te reo Maori, values, tikanga have no commercial value in today's world.

*(from Appendix One, Te Mana Korero III, 2007)*

**Surely we should be catering for the needs of all our students. Why treat Maori differently?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * The reason for a focus on Maori achievement is to redress the statistical evidence of their needs. * Maori are continuing to underachieve despite initiatives - New Zealand society is missing out through Maori underachievement. * Why treat any culture differently? We need to meet the needs of all children – why not Maori students? * Flow-on effects to other learners. * We have a Treaty responsibility. * National requirement under NEG to do this. |  |

**lt doesn't matter what we try, we still can't get our Maori community involved in their children's education or the life of the school.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * What does 'involved' mean? * What is your expectation? * What do you think is the bit that's missing? * What could you do differently! * What's been tried? * What are the opportunities? * What do those who engage say about this? * How do you invite whanau to become involved? * Need to try multiple responses - can't give up. |  |

**We value all the cultures in our school because we are a multicultural community.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * What are the performance indicators in your school that you value all cultures? * We need to recognise Maori culture as unique to this country. * How do you recognise the special place of Maori in New Zealand? * Maori have clear, specific needs - we are bicultural before multicultural. * There's a difference between valuing and acknowledging Maori as a partner. * The school needs to equip students to go into a society, which is bicultural, and Maori are a Treaty partner. |  |

**All our Maori students are achieving above average (implication that there are no underachievement, problems).**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * Define the average. * Show the evidence/data. Compare our data with nationwide data. * Are they achieving to potential? * Even if they are, what are their experiences? * Are there things they believe they have missed? * Could not they improve further? * What do students and whanau have to say? |  |

**Our parents have such low expectations for their children.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * Where is the evidence? * What are these expectations? * How do you find this out? * How have you helped them to know about their children's learning! * What has been or is their experience as a Maori? * That does not mean we need to have low expectations for them. Maybe we can help parents raise their expectations. * What opportunities have you offered whanau to change this? |  |

**We have done a lot of PD around effective teaching and we believe that, if we put our emphasis here, the achievement of all students including Maori, will rise accordingly.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * Have you looked at effective teaching for Maori students? What does best practice mean for Maori students? Need to focus specifically on identifying, meeting Maori needs. * What do the students' voices say about how effective the teaching is? * How has teaching practice changed? * How are you measuring its effectiveness? * What evidence do you have that Maori achievement will rise? * Part of effective teaching is that you acknowledge the student as a whole - and for Maori, this means there are special/other considerations. What it means to be Maori should be part of PD. |  |

**Maori is too hard to pronounce and that's why l haven't really learned any in the past.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * Maybe put yourself in a Maori student's shoes - how would you feel if your name was pronounced incorrectly all the time? * Maybe we could help you improve your Maori. * School should create conditions for teachers to feel OK about trying pronunciation. * Algebra's hard, too - does it stop you developing your own skill set to support students learning in this area? |  |

**I am too afraid to try to speak Maori as I have always felt that l may be criticised for my lack of skill.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * I understand how you may feel, but we work with our students to take risks and if they don't get it right, to have another go. * What are some strategies you could use to help you? * Have you seen people criticised for speaking Maori? * We should practise with other staff in a safe environment so that we can improve our skill. * Better to try and fail than not to have tried at all - success is born of endeavour |  |

**New Zealand is a non-secular society and, as such, karakia are inappropriate in schools.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * Who says? * What is your understanding and knowledge of karakia? * What about celebration of Christmas, Easter, and singing the National Anthem? * Discussion/explanation about karakia being 'whakatauki' which acknowledge the environment that our tupuna lived in. * Part of valuing, appreciating Maori culture is incorporating karakia into school culture |  |

**Many students come to school lacking proper care, regular meals, and are poorly clothed, which hinders achievement. We have so many other issues to overcome with our Maori students and families before any learning takes place - they're caught in the poverty cycle.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * These things are issues, but we have these students in our classrooms X numbers of hours and we need to look at what is possible. * Where is the evidence? * What can you do to address this? * Is this a Maori issue or a social issue? * Concentrate on what you can do now - address teaching and learning. |  |

**Maori students come to school with little literacy background and limited experiences to draw on.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * What experiences are you referring to? What experiences are you expecting? * Show me the evidence. * We need to manage student learning as they come in to the school. * This is a good reason why the school needs to engage in this project. |  |

**Transience is a major factor in Maori underachievement at school.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * Where is the evidence? * What happens as part of your transition in process to ensure that the student can access the curriculum while they're at your school? * Let's do what we can for them while we have them in our care. |  |

**We have very few Maori students at our school so Maori achievement is not really a focus for us.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * Where is the evidence? * Why not? * We need to look closely at how these students are achieving. |  |

**Many of our Maori families do not value schooling and are not committed to ensuring that their children attend school regularly.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * Where is the evidence? * What's happening in these homes? * I wonder why they do not value schooling and what we can do about that? * Maybe there is a difference in understanding? |  |

**We already do this well - we have a kapa haka group, a community member who comes into our school weekly to teach te reo…**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * How can we build on these achievements? Not all students enjoy or can do kapa haka. * Who do they teach te reo to? * Is this (once a week) enough? * Do parents think this is enough? |  |

**Te reo Maori, values, tikanga have no commercial value in today's world.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Possible Responses** | **Additional Responses** |
| * What are those values? Where is the evidence? Who says? * Whose lenses are you wearing - Maori/Pakeha? * There may be no commercial value, but what about culture and identity? * A key curriculum value is valuing diversity, caring about other peoples' needs. * How do you put a commercial figure to values? * Can you identify why 'commercial value' is the important issue here? * What about relationship/work values that underpin our attitudes and behaviours? * Maori students need to value both sides of their heritage. Why the emphasis on their Maori side? * It's not about creating imbalances, it's about doing something about the existing imbalance. * Maori students are exposed to pakeha values and ideals. They see and live pakeha culture. * How can we ensure their Maori side is important to them? * We're trying to lift achievement for Maori - a key part of this is focusing on heritage/culture of Maori. |  |